

Home Run Haggerty.

By George William Daley.

IN AN eastern city last week, through the agency of the "squeeze" play (which Pinch Hobbs and me perfected in the Corndroppers' League years back), a little splatter of a hit to the pitcher won a ball game. A guy who rooted for the losing team says as he was goin' out, kind o' sadly:

"Queer way to lose that game; a measly sacrifice hit did it."

Queer way to lose! The expression brought out a long train of thought, and started it choo-chooing through my mind. Queer game! And then I thought of Chanceville, Ariz., and the queer way we won a game there, and a bunch o' money and we won it on a strikeout. Did you ever hear of a thing like that before—or since? A man striking out and winning a ball game?

You might say that the queerest game of ball the famous Alfalfas ever went up against was the time they played the Whizzers of Whizzerville, where they play progressive ball—that is, in the first inning only singles count, in the second only two-baggers, in the third only three-baggers, in the fourth only home runs, and they went on with six, seven, and eight-baggers until the ninth innin', where they made a jump, for reason or other, an' to win a game in the ninth innin' down there you had to knock the ball for a twelve-bagger—or about six miles.

Now, if you remember, the day the Alfalfas played the Whizzers I won the game in the ninth innin' with a scratch twelve-bagger. They said it was a scratch in Whizzerville, though I claimed it was about as hard a drive as I ever stung a league ball for. The reason they called it a scratch was that it didn't go sailin' out into the next county, but because it hit the short-stop's hands, glanced off 'em, shot down the back o' his shirt, kept on through his pant leg and stockin', and lodged in the heel of his shoe. I had only got eight times around the bases when he found the ball 'cause the crash had knocked the shortstop out and he couldn't tell his nine where the ball was. They might have got me out then, only for the fact that the ball had been driven into the nails of his shoe, and they had to get a cold chicken to cut it loose.

You might say that that was a queer game for a team that had been used to playing only the regular American brand of baseball. But shucks! The Alfalfas had had so many queer sets o' rules here at 'em that nothin' seems hard now. That's why I've brought you through the Whizzer game to the day we played the Chanceville team out in the Arizona desert.

Chanceville, as the name implies, is the greatest gambling town on earth. It ain't no relation to Frank Chance, the Chicago's first baseman. In fact, I never heard o' no ballplayers ever hailin' from there, for they all stay home, the graft is so good. Down in Chanceville you can bet on every horse in every race that is bein' run in the United States that day, an' there ain't no district attorney to jump in an' raid the poolrooms an' keep you from losin' your money. You can play poker, roulette, fan-tan or craps—up and down you can't bet on in barred in Chanceville. That's the reason they came near barring baseball till they found a way of making a gambling game out o' it, with quick action for your money. The motto of the town is: "Take a chance."

It was some time after our Whizzerville game that we struck Chanceville, and we had been sweepin' things before us clear through Texas, Arizona and New Mexico. We got into the town one Saturday morning about 11 o'clock, and as we stopped off to get a drink, a big fellow with a sombrero hat climbed up on a box, took a slate from his pocket, scribbled on it, and then he pulled out a big roll o' bills. This was written on the slate:

Actors 10 to 1
Drummers 5 to 1
Gamblers 100 to 1
Pikers 3 to 2
Tourists 50 to 1
Suckers 1 to 4

"Here you gents," says he, "Here's the only genuine book on these new arrivals. Make your bets now. Their identity'll be known in a minute, an' you won't have to wait for your money if you hit it right. What are they?"

"Give me ten o' that actor bet," says one o' 'em, taking a look at Jim Harrison, our sassy third baseman.

"Best Hardy," says the big fellow on the stool. "You been in this town long enough to know that I don't take no piker's dollar bet. I'll write you down a ticket \$250 to \$25, an' that's the best I'll do."

The Hardy fellow put down \$25 off a roll he carried in his hat, and didn't 'a' got it in any one pocket—'an' another fellow sings out, havin' looked at Pinch Hobbs' big satchel and his general businesslike appearance:

"A little nibble o' that drummer money for a half a hundred will do me, Judge."

"You're on," says the judge.

Just then four or five men caught sight o' Reggie in his gray, made-to-order traveling suit and his silk puff tie, and they rushed down so many hundred-dollar bets on the tourist proposition that the bookmaker rubbed it to 2 to 1. Things were getting mixed up, and some o' the first bettors were gettin' ready to hedge when Sam Merritt, the last man out o' the car, slings out the bat bag and calls Hennessy down for not helpin' him with it.

If you ever seen consternation writ on the face o' people, it was on them fellows that had their money up when they seen that bat bag.

"Hey, ain't you actors?" says the man named Bert Hardy, rushin' up to Josh.

With that there was a whoop, an' the crowd rushed for the judge on the box with hands outstretched. It didn't phase him a bit. Stuffed in the yellow backs in his pocket he stood up straight an' foldin' his arms an' smiled a very superior brand o' quiet laugh. His hull attitude said, plainer than words:

"Show me."

"Well," says Josh, "we are actors, for we play a matinee performance entitled 'The National Game' every afternoon. We're tourists, because we've been all over the United States looking for just such a easy place as this an' we're drummers, because we're sellin' about the slickest article o' baseball that can be found in the United States. So, I figure you all win."

"Dum the luck," says Hardy. "A ball nine, I might a known it 'f'm that big fellow's hands," says he, pointin' to me.

The judge jumped off'n the box an' began rubbin' off the slate with a cheerful smile. "You're a lot a bum guessers," says he. "There's another book goin' here now, though, an' that is that in the game this afternoon the Chancevilles run out before these fellows get nine. Who wants to take that bet at even money?"

We picked up our ears at this, for it concerned us. But we wanted the bet explained, for we didn't understand the judge's words.

"What are you bettin'?" says Josh.

"That we git beat."

"Sure thing," says the judge.

"And that we git beat by nine runs?" says Josh.

"Who said anything about runs?" says the judge. "We don't go by runs here."

"Don't go by runs?" says Josh, while the rest of us whistled. "What is this—more new fangles. Mebbe you don't use a ball or bat? Mebbe there's a little muggins or casino chucked in on the side?"

"This is Chanceville ball, the only kind ever played here," says the judge.

"The old game o' runs an' hits is too slow. That was abolished years back.

in Chanceville the team scorin' twenty-seven putouts quickest wins."

"Twenty-seven old maids, you mean. Why, the team first to bat always loses. You might as well chuck pennies for the game."

"At any other time," says the judge, "your sneers at this town'd get you into a peck o' trouble. 'But you seem interestin', well-meanin' chaps, an' we'll let it pass. Now, in the first place, this here little change in the rules from runs to putouts was done to encourage bettin'."

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The Tale of Chanceville, Ariz., Where Runs Don't Count, Where Money Talks, and a Strike-Out Won a Ball Game.

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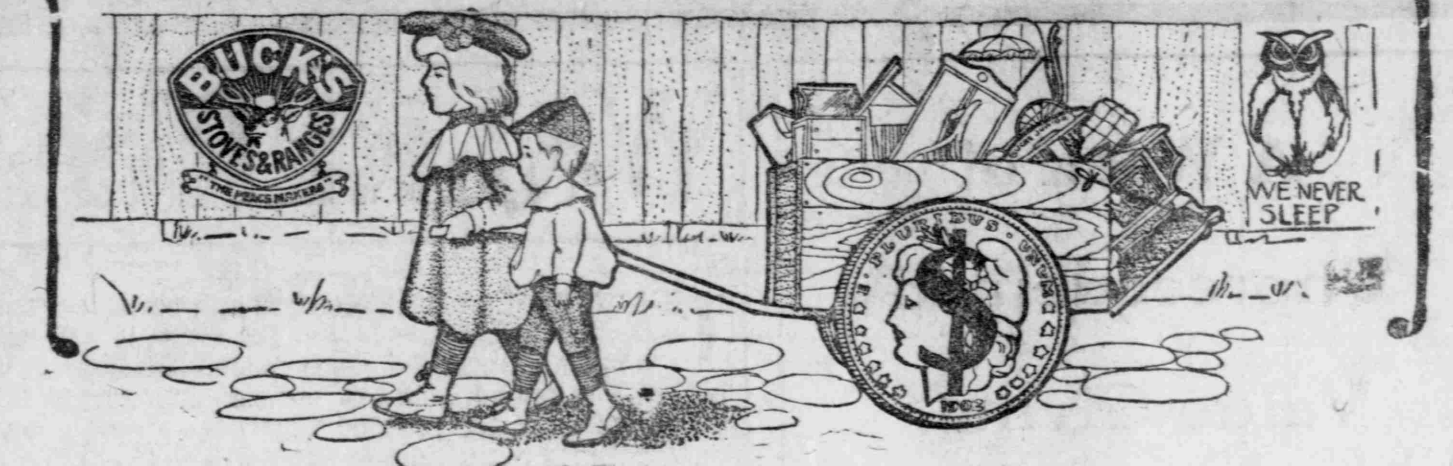
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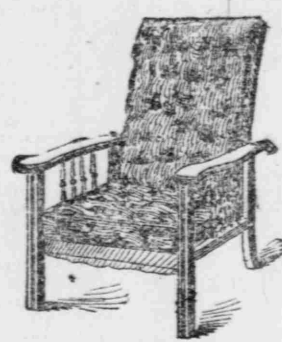
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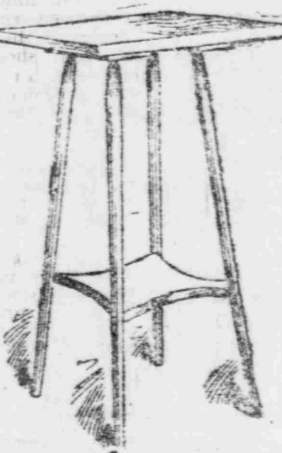
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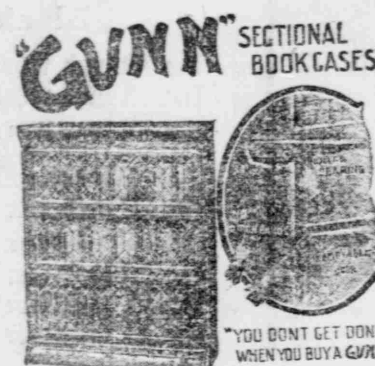
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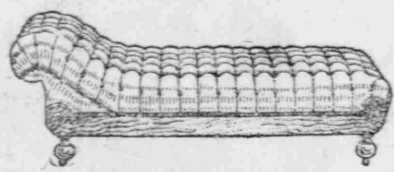


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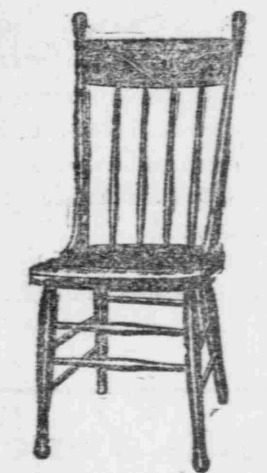
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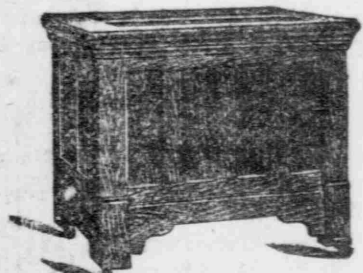
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